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SENSITIVE

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TAGS: ENERGY TURKEY IRAN

SUBJECT: Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria Sign Electricity Cooperation Protocol

Sensitive but Unclassified. Please handle accordingly.

¶11. (U) Summary. During his May 27-28 visit to Bagdad, Turkish Energy Minister Taner Yildiz participated in the first Regional Power and Energy Conference, and signed an electricity cooperation protocol with his counterparts from Iraq, Iran and Syria. The agreement provides for the interconnection of the power grids of these four countries, followed by an enlargement of the connection to include to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. Turkey will reportedly lead this effort. End summary.

¶12. (U) Turkey's newly appointed Energy Minister Taner Yildiz visited Iraq on May 27-28. In a press conference prior to his departure, Yildiz said he would participate in a regional energy and electricity ministers' meeting in Baghdad and would have bilateral meetings with the ministers of the participant countries. Yildiz said the talks with Iraq would focus on electricity trading, bringing the operation of the Kirkuk-Yumurtalik pipeline up to full capacity and cooperation in oil and gas. The representatives of Calik Energy and Kartet Energy (electricity exporter to Iraq) also joined the trip.

¶13. (SBU) Commenting on Yildiz' visit, Kartet Energy Commercial Director Nuray Atacik said electricity cooperation would be the major issue on the parties' agenda in this visit. Atacik noted that, after years of delay, Turkey's State Transmission Company (TEIAS) had finally budgeted capacity increase in the transmission grid between Turkey and Iraq. Atacik said the construction work would not be finalized before 2011.

¶14. (U) Turkish press announced on May 29 that the electricity and energy ministers of Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria signed an Electricity Cooperation Agreement at the end of the Regional Power and Energy Conference. According to the agreement, these countries will build a connection to each other's power networks, and, in the future stages of the project, will extend the connection to the grids of the eight Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. The GCC countries include Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and UAE. According to the press, Turkey is the president of some type of coordinating council that will lead this effort.

¶15. (SBU) At this early stage, it's unclear how serious this initiative will be. It does show that Turkey continues to seek opportunities to take a leadership role in its relations with neighboring countries, including Iran.

Silliman